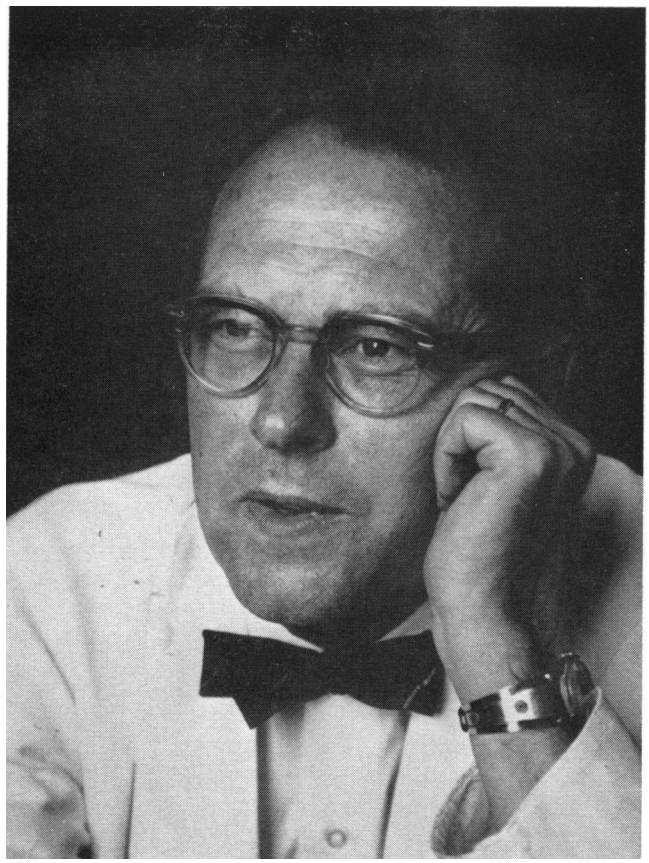

James V. Neel

THE WILLIAM ALLAN MEMORIAL AWARD

Presented at the annual meeting
of The American Society of Human Genetics

Seattle, Washington

August 26, 1965

CITATION

This is one of the rare occasions when to speak to this Society is a pleasure and not a hazard. My charge is to present to the American Society of Human Genetics the recipient of the William Allan Memorial Award of our Society—an award reserved for those very few who have made outstanding contributions to human genetics. The one who has been selected, although a past president of our Society, has not always been a human geneticist. His first love was Drosophila—it could hardly have been otherwise, for his first doctorate was obtained with Curt Stern at Rochester. For six years, he flirted with fruit flies but perhaps he had seen too many milk bottles in his rural

Ohio to look forward to a lifetime as marriage counselor for generations of flies. Whatever the reason, and one might once more suspect the guiding hand of his teacher, he turned to human genetics. His first paper was on the inheritance of red hair, a pleasing and innocuous trait still resistant to the geneticists' probe. With appetite whetted, and perhaps dissatisfied with a scientific world divorced from the immediate concern for the afflictions and infirmities of mankind, he became a physician.

Now armed with two doctoral degrees, he was launched on a life of successful investigation which need not be retold in detail here. James Van Gundia Neel has unswervingly dedicated himself to the creation of an independent discipline: human genetics. He and the department which he has so successfully built have made massive contributions to human population genetics in all its mathematical, biochemical, and evolutionary ramifications. No mean hematologist, his opinion on a blood film is heeded well by those who would learn. His paper on the inheritance of sickle cell anemia is already an acknowledged classic, for it not only paved the way for many a study on the hemoglobinopathies but also placed the concepts of dominance and recessivity in their modern perspective. And so it comes as no surprise to learn of his membership in the American Association of Physicians, the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. He has received the Lasker Award and delivered a number of honorary lectures, including the Galton Lecture in London, a Harvey Lecture in New York, and the Cutter Lecture at Harvard.

An indefatigable worker, a seductive charmer of deans, he can face the hostile stares of the Xavante Indians with as much equanimity as the inscrutable faces of the Atomic Energy Commissioners. Intrepid adventurer and quick change artist, he sheds his knapsack and snake boots to don the cloak of diplomacy without slackening his pace or stride. Even en route from Japan to Africa, there is always time for a brief layover at Willow Run to conduct a departmental seminar. In Washington or in Geneva, he is—everywhere—the despair of travel agents. Those who would work with Jim Neel must first get a travel grant. But don't let this dissuade you; he will be on the committee.

An enthusiastic debater, who is relentless without being contentious, he carries his load with sprightly step, believing it is better to discuss a problem without settling it than to settle a problem without discussing it. Prolific author, he has inspired and guided a generation of young investigators. Some are here today, others are in distant lands; all remember with gratitude his wise counsel and warm encouragement. Ever sustained by a charming wife, who designs his houses and builds his hopes, James Van Gundia Neel will continue to enliven and enrich the field of human genetics in the years ahead. *(Alexander G. Bearn)*